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The Markets in Bilad al-Sham during the Early Islamic Period

*Hatim Nail al-Dmour **

ABSTRACT

This research aims to shed light on the Bilad al-Sham local markets recorded in Islamic sources. The intent is to show the importance of commerce in the region and its role in the development of early Islamic society. The markets played an active role in the history of Bilad al-Sham. Although they had relatively little impact on finance in the region, they influenced society and intellectual pursuits. The main commercial market was a place for people to meet and socialize, in addition to being the early Islamic equivalent of a department store. Markets in Bilad al-Sham were of two types. The first were permanent facilities with consistent stock that grew over time and developed into institutions like the Damascus stores, Halab, Hums, and Beit al-Maqdas (House). The second type comprised more ephemeral monthly or weekly markets. The researcher also examined the procedures and methods of commercial communication in the stores of Bilad al-Sham: (1) the barter exchange system, which was also important in the development of the Dirham and the Dinar as the main currencies used during the Umayyad period, (2) the use of money in commerce, (3) banking instruments of various kinds, and (4) bills and invoices. Weights, scales, and balances used in Umayyad markets were described and management policies and practices examined.

Keywords: Bilad al-Sham, Umayyad markets, Commerce, Barter exchange systems, Currency, Banking, Management policies.

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